

# **Libby Community Advisory Group**

## **Meeting Summary**

### **September 27, 2001**

#### **Introductions**

Gerald Mueller and members of the Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) introduced themselves. Mr. Mueller announced that Dan Strausbaugh has been detailed to New York City and therefore cannot attend this meeting. A list of the members in attendance and guests is attached below as Appendix 1.

#### **Agenda**

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- EPA Report
- County Report
- Attorney General's Visit
- NPL Decision Factors
- Public Comment

#### **EPA Report**

Wendy Thomi and Paul Peronard reported on behalf of EPA.

Wendy Thomi made available copies of two documents, the CAG Evaluation Report and a brochure about the Superfund process. She also stated that EPA will prepare a fact sheet in response to questions asked by Cyrus Lee addressing student asbestos exposure to prior to the cleanup at the schools and at the ball field and while playing in the vermiculite piles. She welcomed other questions about past exposures or other topics. She asked that volunteers from the community assist EPA in looking at drafts of questions and answers.

Paul Peronard said that his focus on Libby had been disrupted temporarily by the New York City tragedy and the tire fire at Pablo. He was forced to cancel some appointments and email received during the week of September 17 were lost. The cleanup in Libby is still on schedule, however.

#### Cleanups

- High school - The cleanup is finished, and the second scheduled home game was played at the football field. EPA is trying to restore the running track this fall, but may have to wait until spring because weather may not allow compliance with installation specifications.
- Middle school - Work is in the restoration phase. Some 7,200 cubic yards of contaminated material has been removed from this site during cleanup. In repairing some water lines, EPA recently uncovered vermiculite material 3 to 5 feet outside the track foot print. This apparently small area of contamination will be opened this weekend when school is not in session and the children are not present.
- Screening plant - The last phase of excavation of the main area has started. Work has started on stabilizing the river bank by applying rip rap. The bank stabilization should be completed in two to three weeks.
- KDC Flyway - Excavation began on September 17<sup>th</sup>. About a months of excavation work

remains. The flyway has been used as temporary storage for materials removed from other sites. Material is being removed as fast as it is being brought in. So far, about 164,000 cubic yards of soil and 30,680 cubic yards of debris have been shipped from this site to disposal.

- KDC Bluffs - Contaminated material was found here in three discrete piles. About one and a half of these have been cleaned up, and 5,700 cubic yards of material have been removed. Work will begin on the pile closest to the rail line next week.
- Export plant - All buildings are now down except for the planer building. W.R. Grace is working on excavation around the building foundations. Cleanup of the wooded area and the area next to the railroad line still remains.

*CAG Member Question - When will the last building be demolished?*

Answer - We need to resolve the issue of the permanent location of the planer building. Throughout the cleanup, EPA has attempted to keep Millwork West in business, and for this reason, the planer building is the last to be demolished.

- Residential properties - Clean up at two properties has been completed and is underway at six others. Generally, stone rock used in landscaping and vermiculite materials are being removed from the residences. EPA will continue to respond to requests for residential cleanups.
- Railroad - After a site walk, a sampling plan will be developed. The hardest challenge will be removing material from an active rail line.
- Stimson Mill - An expansion plant operated on a portion of the Mill site until 1949. A nursery was also located on the Mill site, and this area is contaminated with vermiculite. Stimson's first concern is current worker exposure. Employees are wearing personal air sampling pumps. Chris Weis has met with Stimson management and the lumber and sawmill workers' union. EPA is working out a consent decree with Stimson that will address cleanup cost liability. EPA's priorities are first protecting people and then cleaning up the site as painlessly as possible.

*Audience Member Comment - A backhoe was operating at the Seifke property and dust was flying.*

Response - We have just started excavating vermiculite-contaminated soil at the horse barn on the north side of the property, and dust control is being used. The source of the contamination was equipment stored in the barn area. The backhoe may have been working elsewhere on the property in an uncontaminated area. High asbestos fiber counts were also measured inside the Seifke residence, apparently because contaminated materials were tracked inside it. The equipment has been moved off of the property and the excavation of the barn area should be finished soon. The carpets will be removed and the floors inside the home cleaned. Based on the pilot work on the three residences, EPA expects to be able to clean the home without demolishing it.

Anyone with a question about any of the cleanup activities should either call the EPA Information Center in Libby or, if it is after hours, call a number from the call down list which is attached below as Appendix 2.

*Audience Member Question - Will work on the walking path be finished this fall?*

Answer - Yes. The path is no longer contaminated, but we need to back fill and level some areas so that it will not present a trip, slip, or fall hazard.

*CAG Member Question - What happens if there is a contaminated property that the residents will not grant EPA access for cleanup?*

Answer - I don't know. Except for the KDC property and the mine, I have not been denied access for a cleanup.

*CAG Member Question - Will the residential properties be retested?*

Answer - EPA will retest the three residential pilots, the abandoned house on California, the rental on Montana, and the Foote home. We will use a leaf blower to stir up areas inside the homes and sample. Sampling will occur in about a month and then a couple of other times to ensure that the cleanup is lasting.

*Audience Member Comment - I am concerned about the next generation and their children. I am sorry and ask their forgiveness for what I am leaving you. We should continue to be concerned about unborn children exposed through their mothers, about babies exposed to dust today, and children and adults who were exposed in the past by playing in contaminated material or by their family members who brought home contamination on their clothes. I demand a criminal investigation.*

*CAG Member Question - What about exposure of children in the past at the schools or ball fields? What can be done to prepare for what has been done to these children? What tests are available for them?*

Answer by Dr. Black - Because of the 10 to 30 year latency period of asbestos disease and the risk to children of radiography, chest x-rays are not an appropriate screening tool for children under 18 years of age. People can help children, however, by participating in the UM research which is looking for markers in the blood and for ways of blocking the disease process. Hopefully, Dr. Holian's group will develop a blood test that will obviate the need for x-rays.

Answer by Chris Weis - One of the best things we can do for the children is to encourage them not to smoke and to avoid exposing them to second hand cigarette smoke. Cigarette smoke increases the risk of asbestos disease 50 to 100 fold.

*Comment by Wendy Thomi - EPA will be conducting a second-hand smoke campaign in Libby because of the increased risk such smoke causes to people exposed to asbestos.*

*CAG Member Question - Has EPA developed a testing protocol for kids who attended Plummer School starting in 1980?*

Answer - The medical screening would have covered the first ten years of this period. We don't have a protocol.

*CAG Member Comment - We should focus on getting money from our political leaders for research related to our children*

*Comment by Paul Peronard - Our top priority is to protect children and adults by eliminating exposure to asbestos by finding and cleaning up contaminated material. Our experience with uncovering the water pipe at the Middle School illustrates the questions facing the community. Is it worth it to locate contaminated material and bring it to the surface and clean it up? What*

*is the risk of trace exposure? EPA has shown that the old 1% standard does not provide adequate protection. During her visit here earlier this month, Administrator Whitman committed that EPA will see the cleanup through to the end. We will find the material and make reasonable decisions about cleaning it up.*

*Audience Member Question - What did the Administrator say about cleaning up our homes and businesses?*

Answer - I thought she said that EPA is committed to evaluating insulation cleanups but not yet to its removal. We will check the transcript.

## **County Report**

Ron Anderson reported on behalf of the County. He stated that the County has received thirteen requests for the packets describing the request-for-proposals (RFP's) for a grant writer. October 10 is the County's deadline for receiving the proposals, and the County Health Board will select a contractor on October 24.

*CAG Member Question - What is the selection about?*

Answer - Reading from the RFP cover letter, "Lincoln County, Montana, is requesting proposals from qualified persons and firms to assist with grant writing, specifically for the purpose of developing current and future financial resources to aid Lincoln County residents whose health has been impaired through exposure to asbestos. To be addressed, additionally, is promotion of the health of the community using various tools including communication, facilitation, research, data collection, and analysis."

## **Attorney General's Visit**

Gerald Mueller shared information given to him by Commissioner Windom that Montana's Attorney General Mike McGrath plans to visit Libby on Tuesday, October 16. The Attorney General will spend the morning visiting cleanup sites and the afternoon meeting with the County Commission and the City Commission. He has requested the opportunity to meet with the CAG on Tuesday evening.

*CAG Member Question - Where is the Council on the NPL decision?*

Answer by Mayor Berget - The Council wants more information. There will be a special session dedicated to Superfund at the upcoming meeting of the League of Cities and Towns at which communities on the NPL will share their experience.

*Audience Member Question - Isn't our situation in Libby unique?*

Answer - We can learn from the experience of others who have gone through the NPL cleanup process. For example, Anaconda has experience with property restrictions associated with developing the Old Works Golf Course.

*Audience Member Question - Hasn't Governor Martz said that she will not make her decision regarding NPL until February? Would that delay cleanup?*

Answer - If Governor Martz decides in February, then EPA could make its decision in July. EPA will continue to work on the cleanup here through this period so no delay will occur.

*CAG Member Question - Will the events of September 11 and the war on terrorism divert funds from the Libby cleanup?*

Answer - They may. EPA funds have been diverted to the cleanup of New York City. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is supposed to reimburse EPA for its costs. Some 130 on-scene coordinators have been sent to work on the New York and Pentagon cleanups.

***CAG Action - The CAG agreed to move its first meeting in October from October 11 to October 16 to accommodate the Attorney General's request.***

## **NPL Decision Factors**

Mr. Mueller asked the CAG to discuss factors that should be addressed to help people in the community make up their minds about including Libby on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). Three have been identified at past CAG meetings: liability for cleanup costs, vermiculite insulation removal, and real estate mortgages and appraisals. EPA has also volunteered to compile a list of other communities that are currently or have gone through the NPL cleanup process so that representatives of these communities could be invited to Libby to share their experiences.

EPA has or is addressing the three factors. During her visit, Administrator Whitman committed that Libby residences and businesses would not be subject to cleanup costs. Paul Peronard has recommended that EPA remove the vermiculite insulation from Libby homes and businesses. As stated above in Paul Peronard's report, the transcript of Ms. Whitman's remarks during her visit will be checked concerning the vermiculite insulation removal. Wendy Thomi is arranging for an official of HUD to come to Libby to address mortgage and appraisal issues. Specific concerns identified by the CAG included whether home sales would require an asbestos check off, which is not now required, a home inspection, and asbestos removal if Libby is added to the NPL.

## ***CAG Action***

***October 25 - The CAG agreed to host an open house during the day on Thursday, October 25, and to use its regular meeting that evening to discuss the experience of other communities with the NPL cleanup process. The CAG will select representatives to invite to the open house and CAG meeting. Gayla Benefield agreed to work with Wendy to prepare for the October 25 open house and CAG meeting.***

***November 8 - The CAG agreed to host a second open house during the day on Thursday, November 8, and to utilize its regular meeting that evening to discuss the impact of the NPL decision on mortgage and appraisal issues. EPA will invite FHA and VA officials to participate in these meetings. Cyrus Less volunteered to work with Wendy Thomi to prepare for the November 8 events.***

## **Public Comment**

***CAG Member Question - Is the decision on the removal of vermiculite insulation from Libby residences and businesses being held up because of the need to declare the insulation a public health emergency?***

Answer - Yes. The definition including the locations to which it would apply is critical to EPA's decision.

***CAG Member Question - Isn't Libby unique because of the past exposure to asbestos?***

Answer - There are other locations with similar exposures. For example, a Minneapolis export plant handled vermiculite from Libby. Fifty percent of the workers at that plant have asbestos-related disease. Minneapolis has a population of 300,000 and the urban area about 2,000,000. Because of the numbers and potential costs involved, where one draws the boundary for the health emergency is crucial.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 16, 2001 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of Libby City Hall.

**Appendix 1**  
**CAG Member & Guest Attendance List**  
**September 27, 2001**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Group/Organization Represented</b>
Sandy Wagner	Lincoln County Community Health Center
George Keck	Community Health Center
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Cyrus Lee	Kootenai Valley Head Start
Bob Dedrick	Asbestos Victim
George Bauer	City of Libby
David Latham	The Montanian Newspaper
Wendy Thomi	EPA Ron AndersonLincoln County
Paul Peronard	EPA On-Scene Coordinator
Dr. Brad Black	Lincoln County Health Officer/CARD
Leroy Thom	Former Grace Employee
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim
Robert H. Foote	Libby Ministerial Association
Rob Anderson	Lincoln County

## Appendix 2

### Emergency Contact Information\_

During **normal business hours**, contact Linda Newstrom at the EPA Information Center - 406-293-6194

Or call:

Government Trailer - 406-293-7922

Marcor Field Trailer - 406-293-7924

CDM Office - 406-293-8595

If an **emergency occurs after-hours**, contact:

#### EPA

#### Office

#### Cell

Paul Peronard, On-Scene Coordinator	303-312-6808	303-886-1638
Duc Nguyen, On-Scene Coordinator	303-312-6509	303-886-1636
Chris Weis, Toxicologist, Science Support	303-312-6671	720-320-6254

#### Volpe Center

#### Cell

#### Local number

John McGuiggin, Project Manager	617-320-5608	
Courtney Zamora	617-834-8085	406-293-7711
Paul Kudarauskas	617-510-7505	406-293-7711
Julie Borgesi	617-834-9093	406-293-2771

#### CDM

David Schroeder	703-362-2033	406-293-7847
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#### Marcor

Dan Figueroa, Project Manager	406-293-1306
Marshall Reed, Site Superintendent	406-293-1052